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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: Priority Theme: Addressing inequalities and challenges to social inclusion through fiscal, wage and social protection policies

Statement submitted by Istituto Internazionale Maria Ausiliatrice delle Salesiane di Don Bosco, International Volunteerism Organization for Women, Education and Development — VIDES, Istituto Internazionale Maria Ausiliatrice delle Salesiane di Don Bosco, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

A. Introduction

1. This report is a joint submission by the International Volunteerism Organization for Women, Education and Development and Instituto Internazionale Maria Ausiliatrice, both non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. Taking note of the significant progress made by Member States in improving the living conditions of their citizens and guaranteeing the exercise of their rights, we wish to focus on the issues affecting persons between 15 and 24 years of age (hereinafter referred to as youth) that prevent their full, effective and constructive participation in society.

2. Istituto Internazionale Maria Ausiliatrice is an organization that is dedicated to using education to prevent and solve the problems affecting children and youth in situations of vulnerability or risk. It is active in 95 countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, Oceania and the Americas.

3. International Volunteerism Organization for Women, Education and Development is an organization committed to protecting women, youth and children. Founded in 1987, it is now present in 41 countries across Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas, where it carries out volunteer-led educational projects at the local and international levels.

4. This joint submission welcomes the fact that the World Programme of Action for Youth is one of the programmes to be reviewed at the fifty-seventh session of the Commission for Social Development so that the 15 priority themes continue to be strengthened at the local, national and international levels.

B. Inequalities and challenges to the social inclusion of youth through fiscal, wage and social protection policies

According to the 2017 Revision of World Population Prospects prepared by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, there are 513.8 million young people in the global labour force, of whom only 449 million are employed. In other words, there are 64.8 million young people in the world who are available to work and seeking employment, and yet the global economy is unable to generate enough jobs for them. The social and labour market challenges are clearly enormous given that the youth unemployment rate is 12.6 per cent, which is 7.1 points above the overall unemployment rate.

Although the causes of youth unemployment are many and varied, we would particularly like to highlight the following aspects:

1. Early withdrawal from the school system. These cases mainly relate to youth from low-income families whose entry into the labour market becomes an urgent necessity. If they find work, jobs tend to be poorly paid and lacking in social security benefits or any significant opportunities for professional growth.

2. Inflexible hiring practices. The abusive use of temporary contracts generates uncertainty and a lack of job security for youth, who bear the brunt of these unfair practices. We also find that the demand for highly qualified youth has increased considerably, mainly in high-income countries.

3. Local economies. It is difficult to create synergy and boost the growth of quality jobs within local economies.

4. Transition from the education system to the labour market. Within certain States, it has been difficult to adapt the education system to the rapidly changing job market.

The World Bank estimates that over the next 10 years, the global economy must create at least 600 million jobs just to maintain current employment levels. In this challenging environment, youth entrepreneurship can play an important role in facilitating economic development and job creation. Although young people often opt for self-employment because they are unable to find any other work, entrepreneurship can help them gain valuable skills, including critical thinking, decision-making skills, leadership, team spirit and innovation, all skills that will remain relevant throughout their lives.

Regrettably, however, 2017 global statistics from the International Labour Organization revealed that almost 1.4 billion workers remained in a situation of vulnera' le employment, meaning that workers lacked the benefits of decent work, including a fair income, adequate social security benefits for workers and their families, freedom of expression and equal opportunity, to mention just a few of those benefits.

Furthermore, labour market indicators show a great disparity between men and women. For example, the youth employment rate for men is 44.8 per cent, compared with 30.2 per cent for women, which represents a difference of 14.6 per cent.

Demographic statistics clearly show that this generation of youth is the largest in the history of the world and should therefore be able to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. However, the policies that each country adopts should address the aforementioned challenges. Only in this way can they influence the well-being and survival of future generations.

In this regard, we emphasize the need for youth participation and empowerment: young people have the fresh vision and skills to help Governments analyze problems and find solutions to promote and protect human rights, through the use of new strategies to face new challenges.

We underscore the need for appropriate management of tax policy, which can serve as the basis for a commitment between citizens and their Governments, especially youth.

Consequently, this coalition has the following recommendations for States:

For the most disadvantaged:

a. Guarantee basic standards of comprehensive social protection, paying particular attention to rural and indigenous communities.

b. Create tax collection systems that are fairer and better adapted to the specific nature of the local economy, to efficiently and sustainably raise the funds needed to provide quality basic goods and services.

For business:

a. Provide entrepreneurs with greater flexibility in the exercise of their entrepreneurial abilities and create tax incentives for those who employ young people, while complying with all legal requirements.

To strengthen the local economy:

a. Discourage the unconditional or unlimited payment of unemployment benefits and make additional efforts to improve job quality and ensure that growth gains are distributed equitably among labour force participants.

b. Develop policies and programmes with the capacity to harness the entrepreneurial potential of young people, paying particular attention to young women.

c. Improve access to financing for small and medium-sized enterprises, complementing it with the vocational and business training and financial services that young people need to become successful entrepreneurs.

In collaboration with the education system:

a. Encourage companies and educational institutions to work together to promote greater student participation in the world of work during the training period, combining teaching and learning processes in companies and training centres.

b. Develop mechanisms and practices that can help young people entering the labour market and/or companies hiring workers, and in general to help youth enter the labour market as self-employed or salaried workers.

c. Create an environment where training programmes involving companies and educational institutions are integrated with hiring.

d. Generate education policies that take into account the rapid development of technology-driven jobs and enable young people to be prepared for them.